



Becky Franks

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The
co-operative
bank

“As a manager you always worry that you’re not getting it right all the time”

**GB
MGR**
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Congratulations on being nominated as a great manager!

Awww thanks, it was such a nice surprise, and yeah, it's really nice to be nominated.

We're finding ourselves in quite a weird time with coronavirus. For many workplaces, they've been turned upside down. Has it been quite a daunting task for you as a manager?

At the start when we were kind of unsure if we were going to start working from home it was. I guess it's just something that you never prepare for, so it was hard to know how to approach it. I knew it was important to just keep in touch with everyone so my first priority was making sure that my team had all the information that I had, and making them feel comfortable and know that they can talk to me if they're worried about anything. I wanted work to be the last thing that they were worrying about.

Has it been difficult for you to stay in touch or have you managed to do it quite easily?

No, it's been fine actually, I mean, obviously it's great. We work in a digital team anyway, so we're quite used to doing a lot of things online, so as soon as we were all working from home, we decided to do daily video calls which were really nice. I think definitely for the first few weeks, it was just good to talk about anything we've seen in the news and with video it's good to see people's body language and obviously you can tell if people are worried, so I definitely think it was important to have that contact. Usually when we work from home, we all use it as a bit of a quiet day so I think it was just getting used to needing to be in contact a bit more.

If you've been working from home a little bit anyway, has it been easier do you think? Compared to companies who haven't had that before?

From a technical point of view, we know that we've got all the equipment we need at home and we can access everything that we need to. So, I think with working from home, technical aspects weren't an issue for us, and I've got a great team. I know I can trust them to get on with things. It was probably just a bit strange working from home every day, but everyone has got on with it and I've been really impressed with them. It's shown me even more what a good team I've got. Obviously, I trusted them before anyway, but I think they've been really resilient. You know everyone's just got on with it, and I've been really impressed with them.

What have your biggest challenges been as a manager during COVID?

I wanted to make sure that my team weren't sitting at home worrying. Obviously being at home, you've got a lot more time to reflect in your own company, than what any of us are used to. I was concerned that they might be worrying and overthinking and watching too much news. I was also worried that people wouldn't be taking lunch breaks and I think it's quite easy when you're at home, not to move from your desk and end up working late because when in full lockdown, you feel like you've got nowhere to go in the evening so you might as well be online. We were having discussions around that, making sure people weren't working too long and we did some, silly games, quizzes and little challenges to encourage people to go for a walk and speak to each other.

Thinking of mental health, how do you feel that might have impacted the way you manage the team?

I think it's definitely important to take into consideration that even if you yourself, and your team don't normally suffer from that kind of thing, with the situation that's going on, keeping in regular contact and working out if anyone was feeling stressed or worried about anything, encourage them to take a bit of a shorter day or take a longer lunch and for work to almost be the second priority. I know as a team we get a lot of work done so I wasn't really worried too much about productivity. I just wanted to make sure that they weren't worrying about work.

Although having challenges it must be a good feeling that you have been recognised as a great manager, despite the uncertainty and anxiousness. How does that make you feel?

I was really surprised, I think as a manager you always worry that you're not getting it right all the time, but it was nice to be recognised and I guess just having the appreciation from the team that I'm trying to do my best for them and put them first. So, yeah, it was really nice, you always feel a little bit awkward when you get recognition, but it was really nice and I appreciate it!



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Are you finding it difficult to keep your culture alive while working remotely?

We're quite focused in digital, especially with having a strong culture with people working together. It was something nice to focus on so, apart from my day to day role, I'm heavily involved with the digital bees and we do a lot with the community, supporting students, so it's almost been quite a nice break to feel like we're helping students, and our customers. It gave us another focus and it was a nice feeling to be helping other people, so I've definitely found being involved in the 'Bees' network has been really good during this time.

For those managers that are perhaps struggling, or new to management, have you got any best practice examples of how you're supporting your team?

Keeping in touch with people and caring about them. I've got a team of six at the minute, and it's nice to think of us as being a little bit of a support network. I think it's almost brought us all closer together. When we're in the office and you've got different people working from home, we only really have one meeting a week where we're all together, now we're having a catch up every day. It's just about keeping in touch with people and keeping them up to date. I try and share the information I know, so that people know what's going on, especially when things are so uncertain. You need to trust that everyone is getting on with their work and be there for them if they need to speak to you. You need to make sure you're always approachable and you're never too busy for someone to ask you a question.

The world of work might not get back to what it was before, how do you feel about managing people in the new world?

I think because we're in digital we're very used to things changing and adapting to new and better ways of working, I don't think I've got any massive concerns as such. We'll just adapt to whatever the new norm is. I think one thing that might come out of this and is probably the same for a lot of businesses, is maybe we'll work from home a few more days each week, but if you know that's creating better wellbeing for colleagues and productivity is the same, then I don't see why we shouldn't.

Do you think your team would feel safe to go back to work and how do you think they're going to react to the situation?

It's something that we've spoken about a lot in our daily catch ups. We're not going back for a while. I think everyone felt quite happy that the business has made that decision. It's nice to have a date in mind for when we're going back compared to friends that may be a bit unsure as to how soon they're going to have to go back, so I think that gives everyone a bit of confidence that we're not going to be rushed. I know that the business wouldn't send us back until they're happy that everyone's going to be comfortable and feel safe.

You've been there for your team and now they've nominated you as a great manager. I'm sure it's also shown you what you can do in terms of virtual management.

I'm very appreciative of having such a great team. They're very self-sufficient and very supportive of each other so it's lovely to be nominated. I'm lucky I've got a great manager as well, so I nominated her, and I think hopefully it breeds a culture of people supporting each other and shouting about it when you feel you've got a great manager.

The great manager campaign is

“A way to recognise those that are, and inspire those that want to be”

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